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"He Can Catch Fire"

A rested Jimmy Carter pursues new campaigns

EXCERPT

The President flew to New York City to defend the imminent SALT treaty before a convention of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. Anticipating the ratification struggle looming in the Senate, Carter declared that the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are "essentially equivalent," and that "each side has the will and the means to prevent the other from achieving superiority." Neither side, he went on, can "exploit its nuclear weapons for political purposes" or use them "without facing almost certain suicide." One aim of SALT II, Carter said, is to check the Soviet momentum in building up its strategic arms.

On the controversial question of whether the U.S. could detect a Soviet violation of the treaty, the President insisted that "any cheating which might affect our national security would be discovered in time for us to respond fully." He said that the U.S. monitoring stations in Iran, lost in that country's recent revolution, were "only one of many intelligence sources that we use to follow Soviet strategic activities." He cited "photographic satellites and other systems," but claimed that the U.S. had "sensitive intelligence techniques that obviously cannot be disclosed in public."

The choice facing the nation, he concluded, is "between an imperfect world with a SALT agreement or an imperfect and more dangerous world without a SALT agreement." The wrong choice, he contended, could lead to "a dark nightmare of unrestrained arms competition."